REPORT

OF THE

Agricultural Department

ST. KITTS-NEVIS

FOR THE YEAR ENDED

31st DECEMBER, 1941.

SECTION I.

AGRICULTURE IN THE PRESIDENCY.

WEATHER CONDITIONS.

THE average rainfall for the year in St. Kitts was 50.92 inches. This is nearly 4 inches below the average of the island for the past 28 years. The rainfall was badly distributed. The period February to April was very dry and in May the precipitation was 8 inches above the average for that month. For the remainder of the year the rainfall was below the average. The rainfall for the important period September to November was 9 inches below the average for these months.

Similar weather conditions prevailed in Nevis and Anguilla.

SUGAR

St. Kitts. In 1940 the rainfall for the first half of the year was above the average but during the second half of the year the rainfall was below the average in all months with the exception of November.

The St. Kitts (Basseterre) Sugar Factory purchased from growers in St. Kitts 290,210 tons of canes as compared with 263,818 tons in 1940 and 262,501 tons in 1939. Returns from estates show that 10,178 acres were reaped as against 9,735 acres in 1940 and 9,665 acres in 1939. The average yield of cane per acre was 28.51 tons as against 26.94 tons in 1940 and 27.16 tons in 1939. The average yield of sugar was 3.60 tons per acre. The output of the St. Kitts Factory was 37,187 tons of grey crystals—within 150 tons of the record crop of 1939.

The sugar exported amounted to 34,961 tons. Owing to difficult shipping conditions 574 tons had to be held in stock for export in 1942. The crop was sold to the British Government at £12. 0s. 4d. per ton f.o.b. and contracting growers received from the Factory a first payment of 15s. 7.04d. per ton for canes. Contractors were paid 15/- on account and the additional amount later. The Contractors' share of the surplus was 4s. 1.55d. per ton making a total price of 19s. 8.59d. per ton. The total deferred payment made to the contracting estates amounted to £59,781 1s. 10d. and approximately one-third of this was distributed to estates' labourers as a bonus at the end of the year.

At the end of the year the 1942 crop was estimated at 35,000 tons sugar from 10,081 acres.

Nevis. Sugar cane production was much above that of 1940. 4,594 tons of canes were purchased for shipment to the St. Kitts

(Basseterre) Sugar Factory as against 1,601 tons for the previous crop. The quantity of canes purchased at the Hamilton Sugar Works for the manufacture of Fancy Molasses was 2,787 tons as against 3,144 tons in 1940. 60,861 wine gallons of Fancy Molasses were exported to Canada and was sold at a price of 22 cents per gallon f.o.b. Nevis. Empty packages were provided by the buyer. The remainder of the cane crop was used for the manufacture of muscovado sugar for local consumption.

Growers who sold canes for shipment to St. Kitts received a total payment of 13/9½d. per ton at the scales and growers who sold to Hamilton were paid 13/9d.

COTTON.

The 1941 cotton crop was reaped from the following acreages: St. Kitts 1,500 acres, Nevis 4,000 acres and Anguilla 150 acres. Figures for production are given below:

	Clean Lint lb	Stained Lint lb	Total lb
St. Kitts ...	239,496	43,278	282,774
Nevis ...	518,242	35,179	553,421
Anguilla ..	17,931	1,043	18,974
Total ...	775,669	79,500	855,169

All clean lint was purchased by the Ministry of Supply at 1/10½d. per lb. f.o.b. In Nevis 1,071,725 lbs. clean seed cotton were purchased by Government from peasants and 333,454 lbs. clean lint marketed on their behalf. The total price received by peasants in Nevis for clean seed cotton was 6½d. per lb.

Stocks of stained cotton were shipped on consignment to the British Cotton Growing Association and most of this cotton has now been sold at prices ranging from 8d. to 10½d. per lb.

MINOR INDUSTRIES.

Coconut Industry. The coconut plantations in Nevis continue healthy and there has been an increase in the production of nuts. At Pinneys and Paradise the total production for the year was 328,034 nuts as against 218,668 nuts in 1940. 27½ tons of copra were exported as against 9 tons in 1940.

Maize. During the year the Corn Factory in Nevis was removed from the site near the St. George's Rectory to the Hardtimes Settlement. A new and larger building was erected and the production of cornmeal on a small scale was continued. There is every reason to believe that the output of the factory will soon show an increase.

FOOD CROPS.

During the year the local food production committees in St. Kitts and Nevis continued to urge on estate owners and peasants the necessity for a greater production of local foodstuffs for home consumption. In December, on the direction of His Excellency the Governor, a fresh food production campaign was inaugurated. The Food Production Committee in St. Kitts decided that compulsory cultivation of vegetables on sugar estates, on the lines followed in Barbados, should be adopted and Government was recommended to take steps to introduce the necessary Defence Regulation.

In Nevis mass meetings were held throughout the island and members of the Food Production Committee along with officers of the Agricultural Department explained what crops should be planted and where planting material could be obtained. Towards the end of the year when the seriousness of the world situation brought the necessity home forcibly a real effort was at last made by all concerned to make the island as self-supporting as possible.

LIVESTOCK.

The pedigree animals on Government land settlement estates in St. Kitts and Nevis were in satisfactory condition during the year. The strain of milch cattle is being improved and the breed of pigs and sheep.

SECTION II.

WORK OF THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE.

Plant Importations. The following new cane varieties were received from the Plant Quarantine Station in Trinidad: B.34104, B.38212, B.38230, B.38178, B.38232, B.38155, B.37107, B.37154, B.3791, B.3774, B.3737, B.3703, B.3771, B.3777, B.3708, Co.419 and Co.421. Cuttings of two varieties of Elephant Grass and of Guatemala grass were also received from this station.

Plant Distribution. The following were the more important propagating material distributed during the year: sugar cane cuttings, sweet potato cuttings, cassava cuttings, yam seed, cotton seed, grafted mango plants, budded citrus plants, breadfruit plants and a large number of vegetable seedlings. A large quantity of imported vegetable seeds was also sold.

EXPERIMENT STATIONS.

At the Stations in St. Kitts and Nevis work was continued on the improvement of locally grown food crops and plots of varieties of sweet potatoes and yams were maintained. In Nevis the old Station is being abandoned and work is now carried on at a much larger Station on Prospect Estate, a Government land settlement area.

In St Kitts the propagation of fruit trees and decorative trees and plants was continued. The multiplication of new cane varieties received from the Plant Quarantine Station and of pedigreed cotton seed from Montserrat was continued.

EXPERIMENTAL WORK.

Sugar Cane. Experimental work with this crop is carried out by the Department in co-operation with the Sugar Cane Investigation Committee and all experiments are conducted on the sugar estates. The experimental scheme is planned each year by Mr. P. E. Turner, M.Sc., F.I.C., Adviser in Sugar Cane Experiments to the Commissioner of Agriculture.

During the year the staff of the Department supervised the reaping of 9 Varietal, 4 Cultural and 28 Manurial experiments. The results of these were published by the Adviser in Sugar Cane Experiments and copies sent to all sugar estates.

For the 1941-43 crop 10 Varietal, 3 Cultural and 15 Manurial experiments were laid down.

Cotton. A varietal trial was carried out on Douglas Estate in St. Kitts to compare the following varieties: M.S.I, S.I.W., BD, VH. 9 VH. 10 and V. 135. The results were submitted to the Cotton Adviser to the Commissioner of Agriculture for statistical analysis and the following conclusions were arrived at :—

MSI is the outstanding variety in this trial having outyielded significantly its nearest competitor. V. 135 did badly and gave a significantly lower yield than any other variety. It is now clear that at present prices we have no variety which is likely to compete with MSI with the possible exception of BD which has done well in some trials and might get a slight premium in an open market. Superfine varieties do not appear likely to compete with MSI except in unusual seasons. If a better quality type was required, some of the later VH strains would have to be tested extensively.

LAND SETTLEMENT SCHEMES.

St. Kitts. Satisfactory progress continues to be made at the Fahies

settlement. During the year a 'Tapia' house was erected for the Ranger. The contour survey of Sadlers Estate was completed at the end of September and allotment of the lands was started in October. As a temporary measure three acre allotments are being made and tenants are permitted to grow one acre of sugar cane on the lower lands. Special attention is being given to the cultivation of food crops.

Nevis. The Schemes at Hamilton, Low Ground, Hardtimes, Cades Bay, Spring Hill and Prospect received much attention during the year, with special attention to food production, including green vegetables, rotation of crops and contour cultivation. It can reasonably be said that on the whole some advance was made. Investigational plots, which also serve as demonstration plots, are operated at Cades Bay, Spring Hill and Prospect. It is hoped to extend these plots to include all of the settlements in the near future.

GOVERNMENT GINNERY IN NEVIS.

The total quantity of seed cotton ginned was 1,137,259 lbs. clean and 97,895 lbs. stained, which gave 358,166 lbs. of clean and 29,985 lbs. of stained lint.

MARKETING OF PEASANTS' COTTON IN NEVIS.

The marketing of peasants' cotton was continued as in the past. An advance of 4d. per lb. was paid on all clean seed cotton delivered to the Department and an additional advance of 1d. per lb. was paid later to assist growers in the preparation of lands for the next crop. 1,072,725 lbs. of clean seed cotton were purchased and 333,454 lbs. lint sold to the Ministry of Supply at 1/10½d. per lb. f.o.b. After deducting expenses, a bonus of 1½d. per lb. for seed cotton was paid, making a total price of 6½d. per lb. for seed cotton. Government also advanced ½d. per lb. on stained seed cotton.

CHEMICAL ACTIVITIES.

Samples examined in the Laboratory consisted of soils, milk, fancy molasses, manures, water, kerosene oil (flash point), etc.

AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION.

The Agricultural Superintendent continued to give lectures in Soil, Science and Botany to the senior class from the Grammar School.

SOIL CONSERVATION.

Work on soil conservation was continued in St. Kitts and Nevis during the year. Dumpy levels have been obtained for the use of the officers of the Department in both islands and much attention is being given to contour cultivation.

LEGISLATION AFFECTING AGRICULTURE.

In the 1938 report of the Department a complete list was given of legislation affecting agriculture then in force. In 1941 no new legislation affecting agriculture was passed.

STAFF OF THE DEPARTMENT.

Agricultural Superintendent	R. E. Kelsick
Assistant Agricultural Officer (Nevis)	J. N. W. Niccolls
Junior Agricultural Assistant, St. Kitts	E.R.A.Martin, D.I.C.T.A.
Agricultural Instructor, St. Kitts	E.O.R. Lake
Agricultural Instructor, Nevis	W. I. Howell
Agricultural Instructor ,, ...	Vacant
Agricultural Instructor, Anguilla	F.S. Delisle
Land Officer & Cotton Inspector, St.Kitts	A.Mitchell (to 5th Sept.)
,, ,, ,, ,, ,,	W. C. Chaderton (from 8th Sept.)
Land Officer & Cotton Inspector, Nevis..	C. Wilson
Foreman, Experiment Station, St. Kitts ..	J. Hanley